

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 MCT-01 /059 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/ECA:FERONDON:JC
APPROVED BY ARA/ECA:RWZIMMERMANN
-----231724Z 007509 /50
R 231446Z MAY 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SHUM, PFOR, AR, US

SUBJECT: KNOWLEDGEABLE ARGENTINE VISITORS URGE U.S.
CAUTION IN TREATMENT OF ARGENTINA

1. IN PAST FEW DAYS ARA/ECA HAS DISCUSSED ARGENTINE
AFFAIRS WITH THREE VERY KNOWLEDGEABLE ARGENTINE CIVILIAN
VISITORS. WHILE THEY COME FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS,
THEY CONCUR IN SAYING THAT HUMAN RIGHTS CLIMATE REPEAT

CLIMATE HAS WORSENERED IN ARGENTINA DESPITE LOWER LEVEL OF
TERRORISM. EVEN SO, THEY BELIEVE IT WOULD BE AN ERROR FOR
UNITED STATES TO SANCTION ARGENTINA FURTHER, BECAUSE
THIS WOULD LEAD TO WORSE SITUATION.

2. ONE VISITOR FELT THAT ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT WAS MAKING
SERIOUS EFFORT TO RESTRAIN UNDISCIPLINED ELEMENTS OF
SECURITY FORCES UP UNTIL LATTER PART OF 1976. HE STATED
THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S ELECTION REVERSED THIS TREND
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BECAUSE THE ARGENTINE MILITARY ANTICIPATED HOSTILITY FROM
THE NEW ADMINISTRATION. SECRETARY VANCE'S ANNOUNCEMENT
IN FEBRUARY 1977 THAT FMS CREDITS WOULD BE CUT WAS TAKEN
BY THE ARGENTINE MILITARY AS AN ACT OF AGGRESSION AGAINST
THEM, AND FURTHER REASON FOR IGNORING U.S. PLEASFOR
CHANGE. VISITOR, WHO HAS ACCESS TO HIGHEST LEVELS OF ARGEN-
TINE ARMED FORCES, SAID THAT MILITARY TEND TO BLAME

PRESIDENT CARTER, DEMOCRATS ON HILL AND STATE DEPARTMENT (IN THAT ORDER) FOR MEASURES AGAINST ARGENTINA. HE MADE A PLEA FOR GREATER, MORE FREQUENT COMMUNICATION BETWEEN U.S. AND ARGENTINA (PARTICULARLY VISITS TO ARGENTINA BY KNOWLEDGEABLE, INFLUENTIAL AMERICANS) AND A FRANK AIRING OF SPECIFIC ISSUES THAT TROUBLED US, INCLUDING HUMAN RIGHTS BUT BROKEN DOWN INTO COMPONENTS. SANCTIONS ARE NOT THE RIGHT APPROACH, HE SAID, BECAUSE THEY ONLY SERVE TO HARDEN MILITARY. COMMENTING ON OVERALL HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION, HE THOUGHT THAT THE SITUATION WAS QUANTITATIVELY BETTER INASMUCH AS THE TERRORISTS ARE NEAR ELIMINATION, BUT INTELLECTUALLY PEOPLE NOW ARE RESIGNED TO THE EXCESSES. HE WAS QUITE DISTURBED, HOWEVER, ABOUT RECENT ECONOMIC ARRESTS AND THE READINESS OF THE MILITARY TO EQUATE ECONOMIC DELINQUENCY WITH SUBVERSION. HE MENTIONED ROBERT COX (BUENOS AIRES HERALD) ARREST AND HOW, OVERNIGHT, SOME PEOPLE WERE READY TO CONSIDER COX A SUBVERSIVE. OUR VISITOR WAS GENUINELY WORRIED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A WITCH HUNT AND THE LIKELIHOOD THAT ARGENTINES WOULD LOOK THE OTHER WAY IF THEY THEMSELVES WERE NOT INVOLVED. WITH REGARD TO THE GRAIVER, LANUSSE AFFAIR, HE THOUGHT THAT APART FROM WHAT SUBSTANCE THEY MAY HAVE, THEY ARE BEING PURSUED AS A KIND OF SMOKE SCREEN TO HIDE THE GOVERNMENT'S INABILITY TO PROCEED, AFTER ONE YEAR, WITH THE BASIC TASKS AHEAD OF GOVERNING THE COUNTRY.

3. ANOTHER VISITOR, WHO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE MAY HAVE SEEMED OVERLY OPTIMISTIC IN THE PAST, REPORTED THAT THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION HAS DETERIORATED CLEARLY. HE WAS NOTABLY DISTURBED BY THE INCREASING PRACTICE OF THE SECURITY FORCES WHEREBY RELATIVES ARE PICKED UP, SORT OF AS HOSTAGES, IF THE ACTUAL PERSON BEING SOUGHT CANNOT BE FOUND. COMMENTING ON THE MAY 7 DECLARATION BY ARGENTINE BISHOPS, IN WHICH THE SECURITY PRACTICES OF THE GOA WERE CONDEMNED, OUR VISITOR SAID THE CHURCH HAD TO SPEAK OUT BECAUSE NO OTHER ORGANIZATION, POLITICAL OR JOURNALISTIC, COULD DO SO WITHOUT SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES. BUT IT IS ONE THING FOR THE CHURCH TO SPEAK OUT AND ANOTHER FOR THE UNITED STATES TO TAKE PUBLIC ACTION. THE CHURCH IS AN INTERNAL, ARGENTINE VOICE; US ACTIONS ARE EXTERNAL INTERFERENCE. THE CHURCH'S ACTION CANNOT BE USED TO STIMULATE MILITARY NATIONALISM; AMERICAN ACTIONS CAN, HE EXPLAINED.

4. THE THIRD VISITOR TENDS TO BE AN APOLOGIST FOR MILITARY RULE. HE IS VERY CLOSE TO SEVERAL KEY GENERALS. THE VISITOR WAS AT A TOTAL LOSS TO EXPLAIN, HOWEVER, WHAT THE

MILITARY ARE TRYING TO DO BY EQUATING THE GRAIVER-
TIMERMAN-LANUSSE AFFAIR WITH SUBVERSION. HE TOO SEEMED
TO FEAR THAT ARGENTINA WAS ON THE VERGE OF SOME NEW,
FEARFUL WITCH HUNT. AND HE TOO ASKED THE UNITED STATES
TO REFRAIN FROM MAKING MATTERS WORSE FOR ARGENTINES. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, FOREIGN RELATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 23-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE118109
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: FERONDON:JC
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770183-0602
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770527/aaaaaxpq.tel
Line Count: 122
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 8fadbfb8b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05-Apr-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2404825
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KNOWLEDGEABLE ARGENTINE VISITORS URGE U.S. CAUTION IN TREATMENT OF ARGENTINA
TAGS: SHUM, PFOR, AR, US
To: BUENOS AIRES
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8fadbfb8b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009